

May 15, 2003

OFFICIALS TO SIGN AGREEMENT FOR BINATIONAL FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM, FIRST OF ITS KIND ON THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

Officials from the United States and Mexico will sign an agreement at noon on May 15 at the Tijuana River National Estuary Research Reserve in Imperial Beach for an Integrated Binational Flood Warning System in the Tijuana River Watershed. The purpose of the project is to provide real-time rainfall and stream flow information to emergency officials on both sides of the border to enable effective decision-making during floods in the Tijuana River Watershed. The flood warning system is the first of its kind along the United States-Mexico border.

The signing ceremony marks a significant milestone in the project, which started in June 2000 when agencies in the San Diego, Tijuana, Tecate region signed a Declaration of Intent to pursue the development of a flood forecasting system for the area. Since that time, a binational technical advisory committee has completed design and installation of the flood warning system for high-risk areas in the watershed. Four automatic rain gauges and two river level gauges donated by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric's National Weather Service have been installed and are generating real-time data. Additional gauges are being installed by the project partners. Specialized communications software has been purchased and installed within key emergency agencies to enable access to the Binational Flood Warning System for the communication and exchange of real-time data on precipitation and river levels.

The international project is a vital link in the region's flood warning system, which now encompasses an area from Morena Lake in San Diego County and points east of Tecate, Mexico all the way west to the estuary near the coast . The Tijuana River Watershed covers more than

1700 square miles. The area has been affected by floods over the years, including a 1993 flood that resulted in loss of life and the destruction of a number of homes and other property.

Officials from the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the International Boundary and Water Commission; Mexico's National Water Commission; the U.S. National Weather Service; County of San Diego; City of San Diego; the Civil Protection agencies of Baja California, Tijuana, and Tecate; State of California Department of Parks and Recreation; San Diego State University; and El Colegio de La Frontera Norte will sign a Declaration of Intent to continue operations, maintenance, and coordination of the new flood warning system. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provided important leadership on the binational technical advisory committee that planned the flood warning system. Pursuant to the new agreement, the agencies will continue to participate in future binational technical meetings facilitated by the International Boundary and Water Commission to coordinate data sharing, gauge maintenance and other issues that may arise.

At the ceremony, the project sponsors will also give special recognition to the individuals and agencies on the Binational Technical Committee who designed and implemented the system.

For more information:

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